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UNIT GC3 (INTERNATIONAL): HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICAL APPLICATION



INTRODUCTION

The aim of this unit is to help you prepare for your NEBOSH General Certificate Unit GC3 (International): Health and Safety Practical Application.

Some people think that this unit is simple, don't bother to prepare themselves properly, and fail as a result.

Make sure you don't fall into this trap! While the process you have to work through is straightforward, in order to succeed you need to understand what NEBOSH expect. If you work carefully through these notes, we are confident that you'll be a successful candidate!

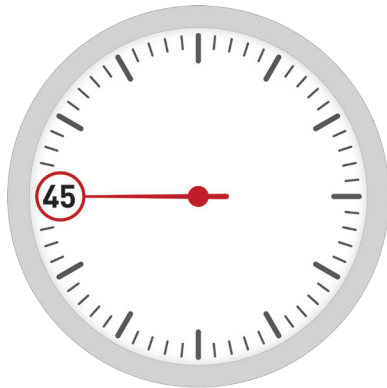
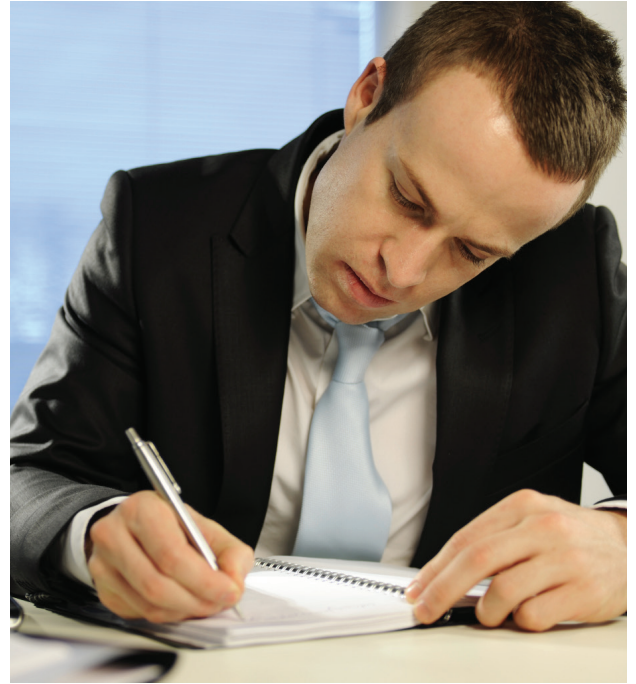
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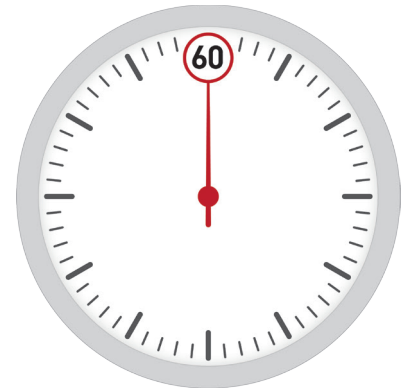
Aim of the Practical Assessment

The aim of the practical assessment is to test your ability to carry out two activities:



A safety inspection of your workplace:

- What are the common hazards?
- Are they adequately controlled?
- What, if any, remedial action is required?



A written report to management:

- Outlining what you found in your inspection.
- Explaining why action is needed (and persuading management to do it!)
- Identifying what management need to do to resolve the issues you have highlighted.

NEBOSH advise that the whole assessment should be completed within 2 hours, although there is no time limit. The inspection should take approximately 45 minutes and the report should be written immediately afterwards and completed in one hour. Let's look at these two stages in detail, starting with the workplace inspection.

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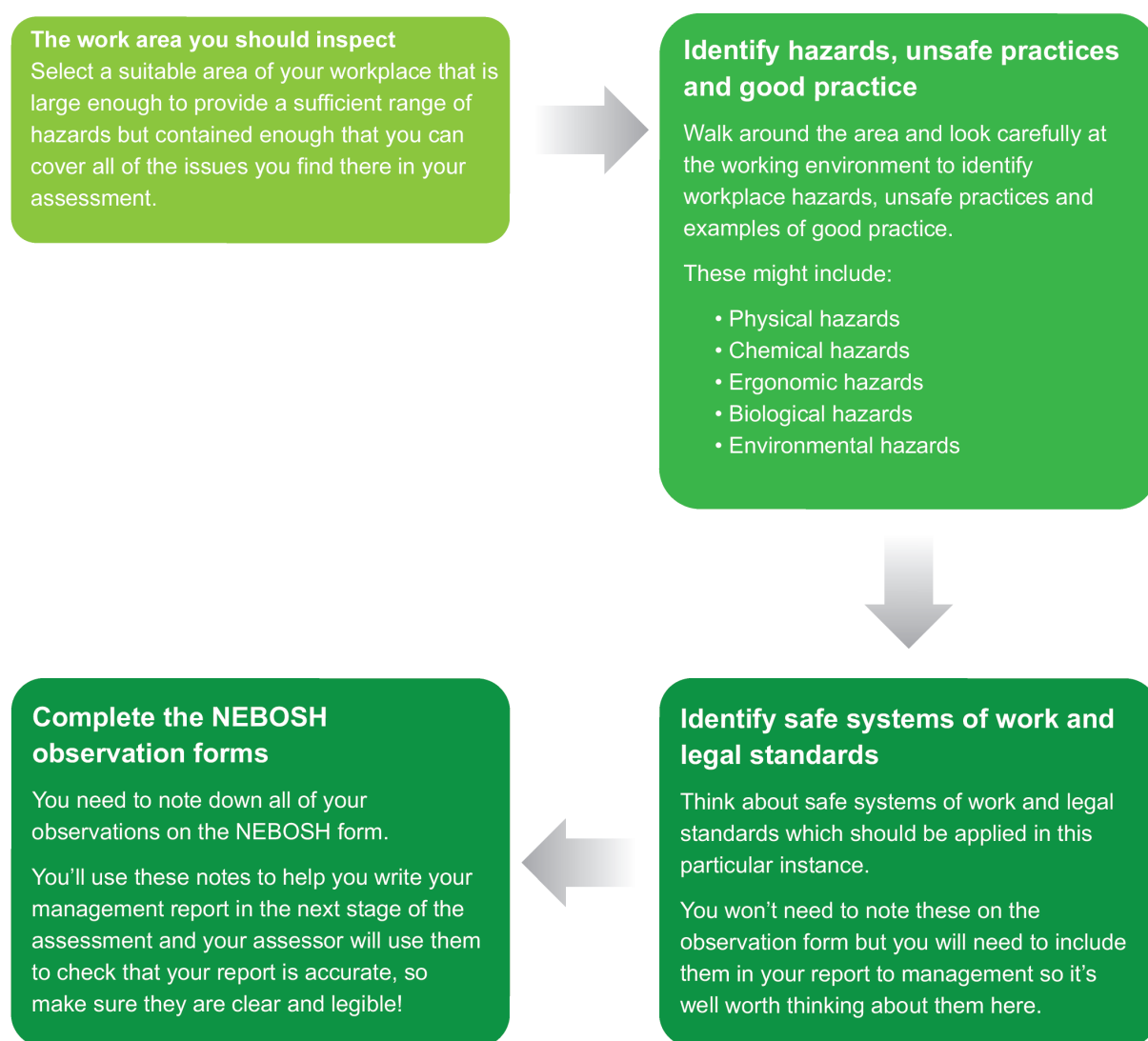
Workplace Inspection

For this assessment you have to show NEBOSH that you can competently complete an inspection of a workplace, identifying any uncontrolled hazards or unsafe practices, their consequences, what needs to be done about them, and how quickly action should be taken.

You will have already covered the types of hazards you are likely to come across in the workplace in Unit GC2 of your course, so we will not go into the detail of those here. Instead, we are going to concentrate on how you should approach the inspection to give you the best chance of success.

So what do you need to do?

The stages you need to work through are shown in the diagram below; let's take a look at each stage in a little more detail.



Inspection Area

In order to complete this assessment you have to select an area of your workplace that will be suitable. To be suitable, your workplace should be large enough to provide a sufficient range of hazards, but contained enough that you can cover all of the issues you find there in your assessment

If your workplace is very large, think about limiting your inspection area to a single office, or workshop.

If you read through the rest of this guidance, you will see the types of hazards that you will be expected to cover in the assessment.

Bear in mind that you should consult the management of the premises to ensure that they are happy for you to complete your assessment there, and so they can ensure that you can carry out the inspection without endangering your own health and safety.

HINTS AND TIPS

Start by taking a good look at your surroundings. Some hazards may leap out at you immediately but try to take a minute or two just to survey the whole area first. It's important that you show a wide range of hazards (rather than four or five of the same 'type') so before you start noting things down, think about the environment as a whole to get a feel for the sorts of hazards and unsafe practices you should be looking for.

Identifying Hazards and Consequences

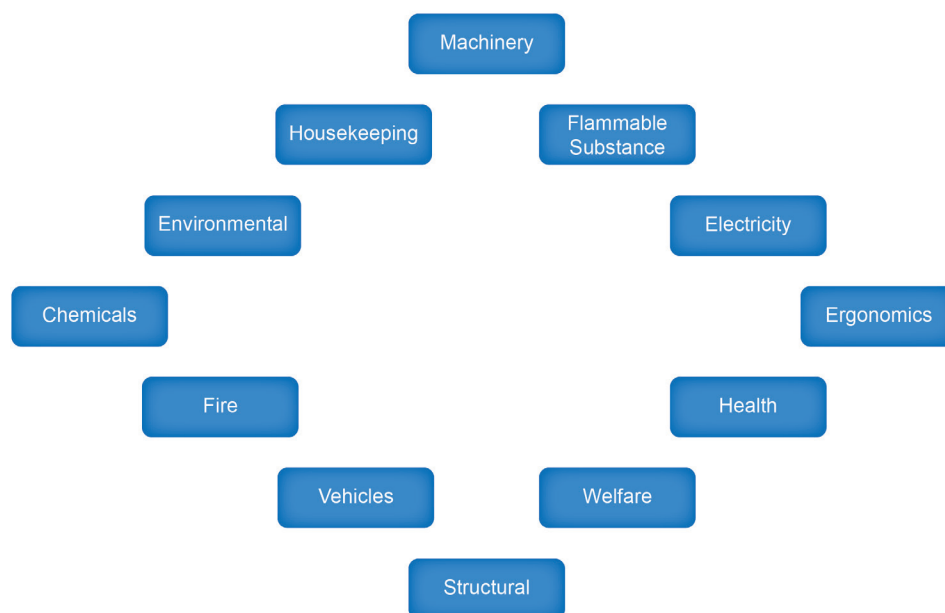
So you have selected your workplace area and you are ready to begin your inspection – where do you start?

Begin by making a few notes about the area you are about to inspect, as you will need these when you write the Introduction to your management report. This should include where and when the inspection took place, a description of the area and a description of the activities taking place in the area. An indication of the number of staff working in the area will be helpful, too.

Next, you need to turn your attention to any hazards in the area. To score well, you should aim to identify at least 20 examples of uncontrolled hazards and unsafe practices. NEBOSH recommend that you identify **more than 20, but no more than 30**, to avoid duplication, or inappropriate hazards being identified. As well as identifying hazards, it is very important that you also state the **consequences** of exposure to each hazard. In other words, you should indicate the **risk** that the hazard will create. For example, you may have identified 'Boxes stored in pedestrian walkways' as a hazard. This will not be enough for full marks – you must also state the consequences. Therefore, your entry in this column might be 'Boxes stored in pedestrian walkways – obstruction of access and egress and/or risk of musculoskeletal injury if lifted.'

You need to make sure that these hazards cover a range of different topics (at least four different types of hazard). Try to picture in your mind all the various topics you have studied in your course (some of which are covered below) and attempt to cover as many of them as possible in your examples. If you repeat a hazard (for example, if you reference three items of work equipment that all require portable appliance testing), you will only be marked once.

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Hazards

GLOSSARY

Hazard – something with the potential to cause harm (i.e. death, injury, damage or loss).

In almost any workplace you should be able to find a range of hazards, such as:

- A pothole in the floor (or trailing wires/cables), creating the risk of slips, trips and falls.
- An unguarded pedestal drill, creating the risk of entanglement and severe hand injury.
- Poorly stored combustible waste, creating a fire risk.

If you've studied your course notes thoroughly, you should be aware of lots of other such examples.

For the purposes of completing your inspection, it is important that you describe properly whatever hazard you have identified. So, it is not enough to just say "defective floor" or "fire risk"; you must include enough information so that the examiner can understand what the hazard was, where it was and what the consequences of exposure to the hazard might be. So, on your observation form, rather than "defective floor", you will need to say: "Potholes in the floor outside the workshop door create a risk of slips and trips"; and instead of "fire risk" put: "Fire exit route at rear of archive room partially obstructed by build-up of heavy boxes; risk of being trapped in the event of fire".

Unsafe Practices

GLOSSARY

Unsafe practices – deliberate violations or unintentional errors.

As well as hazards, you need to look for examples of unsafe practices.

Again, in almost every workplace these should be fairly easy to spot and could include:

- Careless forklift-truck driving, creating a risk of collision with workers, buildings and other vehicles.
- Workers smoking in designated 'No Smoking' areas, creating a fire risk.
- A ladder in use against a wall at the wrong angle, creating a risk of falling from height.

Remember to describe any examples you give in detail so the examiner can understand the issue.

Good Practices

As well as unsafe practices, note down a couple of examples of good practice, such as the provision of good welfare facilities. However, it is best not to include more than one or two examples of good practice, as the main point of the exercise is to assess your ability to identify hazards and unsafe practices – there is only one mark available for good practices anyway!

So, now you know what you should be looking for in terms of hazards and unsafe and good practices, take a look around your own workplace and think about the following questions.

Safe Premises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the premises clean? • Are the workplace, equipment, systems and devices maintained in an efficient state, efficient working order and in good repair? • Are floors in good condition and free of obstructions? • Are floor openings adequately protected against falls? • Is there a risk of someone falling out of a window? • Are staircases safe and fitted with a handrail? • Is an adequate level of lighting provided? • Is the workplace too hot or too cold? 	Safe Plant and Machinery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are machines adequately guarded and fitted with appropriate safety devices? • Are power sources to machinery properly connected? • Can machinery and plant be cleaned safely? • Are machines maintained in an efficient state, efficient working order and in good repair? • Is there a formally documented, planned preventive maintenance schedule for machinery? • Are hand tools in good condition, well-maintained and used correctly?
Safe Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the various operations carried out safely? Look particularly at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Manual handling. – Driving of forklift trucks. – Storage of raw materials and finished products. – Ergonomic aspects of machine operation. – Use of hazardous substances. 	Safe Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are materials being handled safely? • Are some of the materials dangerous, such as radioactive substances, chemical substances or biological agents? • Are these substances correctly packaged and labelled? • Is there adequate information on the safe handling of materials and substances?
Safe Systems of Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are safe systems of work established for potentially hazardous operations? • Are these safe systems of work followed implicitly? • Is a permit-to-work system used where there is a high degree of foreseeable risk? 	Safe Access to Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are access roads and internal gangways kept clear, maintained and well-lit? • Are specific provisions made for ensuring safe work at heights and below ground level, e.g. scaffolds, mobile access equipment, protection of excavations? • Are ladders well-maintained and used correctly?
Adequate Supervision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the level of safety supervision adequate? • Are line managers adequately trained in their health and safety duties? 	Competent and Trained Personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are competent persons, e.g. for electrical maintenance work, clearly identified? • Are operators adequately informed, instructed and trained in safe systems of work? • Are first-aiders adequately trained?
Care of the Vulnerable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are vulnerable groups exposed to specific risks? • Do such persons need to receive some form of medical or health surveillance? • Are specific provisions made for the supervision of vulnerable groups? 	Personal Hygiene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a risk of occupational skin conditions through poor levels of personal hygiene? • Are adequate welfare facilities provided? • Is the consumption of food and drink in working and storage areas prohibited?
Personal Protective Equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does personal protective equipment (PPE) provided meet the requirements necessary for the particular hazards and risks of the workplace? • Is there a formal procedure for selection and assessment of PPE? • Do those employees exposed to risks wear their PPE correctly and all the time that they are exposed to those risks? 	Careful Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do operators behave safely during their work? • Were any unsafe practices noted?

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These are the sorts of questions you need to ask about conditions in the inspection area and, as you can see, a lot of these hazards are quite simple to identify – but don’t forget: you need to think about the consequences, too! You can probably think of a lot of similar questions to add to the list.

If you remember to look out for these types of issues when it comes to completing your workplace inspection, you’ll have no problem in achieving the required standard.

HINTS AND TIPS

Identifying Safe Systems of Work and Legal Standards

While you won’t need to record it on your observation form, keep in mind any possible breaches of international standards or conventions, as you will need to make a note of these in your management report.

Completing the NEBOSH Observation Forms

You should now have a good idea of the sort of things to look for as you walk around your workplace inspection area.

As you carry out your inspection, you need to complete the NEBOSH Candidate Observation Form, which will provide you with notes to work from when it comes to completing your management report. **Remember that these notes will be submitted to your examiner, who will use them to decide how effective your management report is, so they must be clear and legible!**

The Observation Form has three columns:

Observations	Control measures	Timescale
Hazards and consequences	Immediate and longer-term actions	

As you can see, NEBOSH have already given you a big clue as to what to include in each of the columns, but here’s a brief summary:

Observations

As it says, here you should include the hazards and consequences that you identified – the sorts of things we have just covered.

Control Measures

Here, you need to state the action required to eliminate or control each hazard or unsafe working practice. You should think about what is needed to immediately control the risk from each of your hazards AND identify the need for longer-term actions.

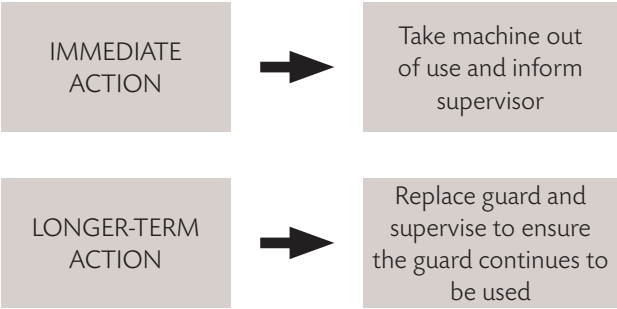
One or two-word statements, such as ‘fit a guard’ or ‘segregate area’ are not enough; although you need to be concise, you still need to give the examiner more detail than that, so it becomes clear what your recommendations are. For example, you might say:

- Storage areas should be clearly marked out and gangways kept clear at all times.
- The adjustable guard to the circular saw should be reinstated and maintained in position during use.
- Employees should be trained in the correct use of ladders and supervised where such work is carried out.
- The level of lighting in the storage area should be increased.
- A planned preventive maintenance system should be introduced.

Most hazards will have more than one recommended action – an immediate action to make the hazard safe and another longer-term action that fixes the underlying problem (the root cause). So, for example:



Machine being used without the appropriate guard



If adequate controls are already in place, remember to think about whether any measures are required to maintain this level of control.

Remember to avoid using generic phrases such as ‘monitor’ or ‘train staff’. Let the examiner know what needs to be monitored, or the type of training that will be required.

Timescale

Here, you need to indicate how quickly action needs to be taken – the higher the risk, the more urgent it is likely to be, while longer-term actions may take much longer to put in place.

This is where you need to pause and think carefully. It is tempting to treat everything as requiring immediate action, but NEBOSH want to see that you can realistically identify what is of the highest risk and prioritise your actions accordingly, so you have to think carefully before making your decisions. The following table should give you some helpful hints.

Immediate	Where there is a risk of serious or imminent danger, or where there is a flagrant breach of legal requirements. This can also be used for actions that can be done quickly at no cost.
Longer term	Where hazards can be eliminated or controlled without the need for capital expenditure and where there is no serious or imminent danger present; or Where there may be a need, for example, to provide information, instruction and training, to write a safe system of work, or to introduce health surveillance.

HINTS AND TIPS

The criteria for assessment of the observation/ inspection stage are available from NEBOSH.

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Report to Management

Hopefully, you've now got a good understanding of what you need to do in the workplace inspection, but your work is not yet finished! Once you've completed the inspection, you need to write a report to management that successfully persuades them to take appropriate action. To do this, you'll need to explain why such information is needed and identify the remedial measures that should be implemented.

HINTS AND TIPS

The report can be typed or written on lined paper in your own handwriting. It should be 700-1,000 words in length, which is equivalent to two or three handwritten sides of A4 paper.

You can consult reference books when preparing the report but be sure not to plagiarise.

Your report should **not** contain photographs or any other extra material.

This is supposed to be a report to management so it **should not just duplicate your observation sheets**. You need to think carefully about the issues you need to bring to the management's attention and only concentrate on those. It must give management sufficient information to allow them to take reasonable action based on the facts you have presented to them and, crucially, persuade them of the need to take that action.

Structuring your Report

You will need to structure your report using the following headings:

- **Title**
- **Introduction, including overview of area inspected and activities taking place**
In this section, you should explain where, when and why the inspection was carried out. This needs to include a clear description of the chosen area and the activities that take place there.
- **Executive Summary**
This should be written after you have completed the rest of the report but should be inserted after the Introduction. The aim of this section is to provide a **concise** overview of the important points and **summarise** your main conclusions and recommendations.
Here, you will need to convince a busy manager of the need to read your full report and, crucially, act on your recommendations.
- **Main Findings of the Inspection**
The report should clearly **identify what corrective actions must be taken**, with an indication of cost implications and some explanation of why this corrective action is necessary. References to the moral, legal and economic arguments can be made, and you should explain the effect the actions would have on the standard of health and safety at the workplace and the possible effects on the business overall.
In the table that follows, you will be able to see how marks will be allocated for this section.
- **Conclusions and Recommendations**
The conclusions should summarise the findings identified in the main body and should persuade management to take action. You should not introduce any new issues at this stage.
Recommendations should follow on logically from your conclusions. You can use the following table to set out your recommendations. All recommendations must be sensible and realistic, appropriately prioritised and have appropriate resource implications.
Remember, these conclusions need to convince your manager of the need to take action.
- The report should be **signed and dated**.

Recommendations	Likely Resource Implications	Priority	Target Date

As a general note, the report should be written in **concise, formal language**. It should be factual and avoid technical jargon as far as possible. Your report should not contain photographs, printed text (e.g. policies or extracts from text books), or other extraneous material.

HINTS AND TIPS

The criteria for assessment of the report to management are available from NEBOSH.

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Final Reminders

Workplace Inspection		Report to Management	
✓	Start by taking a good look at your surroundings. Try to get a feel for the sorts of hazards and unsafe practices you should be looking for.	✓	Keep in mind that the report to management has to successfully persuade management to take appropriate action.
✓	Identify between 20 and 30 examples of hazards and their consequences, as well as some good practices, and explain them in enough detail.	✓	The report should be 700 - 1000 words in length, which is equivalent to two or three sides of A4 paper.
✓	Ensure you include hazards under a range of different topics (at least 4 or 5). Two separate examples of a training need will only get you 1 mark!	✓	The report needs to be structured appropriately, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Title• Introduction• Executive summary• Main Findings• Conclusions• Recommendations• Date and signature The report should be written in concise, formal language and be broken down into distinct sections.
✓	Remember the definitions of high, medium and low priority and don't describe everything as high priority – you need to show you can differentiate between them.	✓	The report should clearly identify what the main findings of the inspection were, with sufficient detail to allow the examiner to understand what was observed, what the risks were and what breaches have occurred.
✓	When explaining what action is required to eliminate or control each hazard or unsafe working practice, be concise but give the examiner enough detail.	✓	The report should clearly identify what corrective actions must be taken, with an indication of cost implications and some explanation of why this corrective action is necessary.
✓	Give more than one recommended action for each hazard – an immediate action to make the hazard safe and another longer-term action that fixes the underlying problem.	✓	Keep in mind the areas that the examiner is going to be looking at when marking your report: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction – 0-5 marks• Executive summary – 0-5 marks• Interpretation of findings/strengths and weaknesses – 0-15 marks• Identification of breaches of legislation – 0-5 marks• Persuasiveness/conciseness/technical content – 0-10 marks• Conclusions – 0-15 marks• Recommendations - 0-15 marks You need to score well in each of these areas to pass.
✓	Keep in mind the areas that the examiner is going to be looking at when marking your inspection: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Range and number of issues identified – 0-15 marks• Identification of suitable control measures – 0-15 marks You need to score well in each of these areas to pass.		
Remember to include everything when you submit the practical assessment for marking, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your completed observation sheets• Your completed report (laid out in the required structure)• A signed declaration that the submission is your own work (if this is missing, your result may be declared void!)			